

In the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of creating an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the method comprising:

receiving from the sender an image file to a server, the image file having associated sender-assigned name, gender, category and indexing information;

presenting to the sender the image file and a choice of a generic face model template from a plurality of generic face model templates;

after the sender chooses a generic face model template, presenting the image file and the selected model template to the sender and requesting the sender to mark features on the image file;

after the sender marks the image file, presenting to the sender a preview of at least one expression associated with the marked image file;

if the sender does not accept the image file after the preview, presenting again the image file and selected model template for the sender to redo or add marked features on the image file;

if the sender accepts the image file after the preview, presenting the image file as an optional animated entity when the sender chooses an animated entity to deliver a multi-media message, wherein:

the category information relates to whether the animated entity will be generally available or only available for the sender.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, wherein ~~the category information relates to whether the animated entity will be generally available or only available for the sender,~~ and the indexing information relates to enabling the animated entity to be in a searchable database.
3. (Currently Amended) The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, wherein the gender information relates to a default gender of a voice associated with the animated entity.
4. (Original) The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, wherein presenting the image file and the selected model template to the sender and requesting the sender to mark features on the image file further comprises instructing the sender to mark points on the image file by indicating a corresponding point on the selected model template.
5. (Original) The method of creating an animated entity of claim 4, further comprising presenting the image file and the selected model template to the sender and instructing the sender to mark points on the image file corresponding to highlighted points on the selected model template until a threshold number of points on the image file have been marked by the sender.
6. (Currently Amended) The method of creating an animated entity of claim 5, further comprising:

after reaching the threshold number of points on the image file, presenting the sender an option to mark additional points;

if the sender chooses to mark additional points, presenting the image file and the selected modal template to the sender and instructing the sender to mark additional points on the image file corresponding to highlighted points on the selected model template until a maximum number of points on the image file have been marked by the sender; and

if the sender chooses not to mark additional points, continuing ~~to the step of~~ presenting a preview of the image file.

7. (Original) The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting the sender with an option to choose textures for teeth, eyes and a tongue.

8. (Original) The method of creating an animated entity of claim 7, wherein after the sender chooses textures for teeth, eyes and the tongue, the chosen textures are added to the image file for use in the animated entity.

9. (Original) The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, further comprising presenting the sender with an option to choose different teeth from a group of teeth for the animated entity.

10. (Original) The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting the sender with an option to choose aging effects associated with the animated entity; and

using the chosen aging effect, modifying the image file to increase or decrease the appearance of the age of the image file according to the option chosen by the sender.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting the sender with an option to modify ~~the~~ an appearance of ~~the~~ a weight of the animated entity; and

~~using the chosen weight by the sender,~~ modifying the image file to increase or decrease the appearance of the weight of the animated entity according to the option chosen by the sender.

12. (Currently Amended) A method of enabling a sender to create an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from the sender to a recipient, the animated entity arranged to deliver a text message from the sender, the method comprising:

receiving from the sender an image file at a server, the image file including category information;

presenting to the sender the image file and at least one generic face model ~~templates~~ template with an option to choose one of the at least one generic face model ~~templates~~ template to assist in marking the image file; and

after the sender selects one of the at least one generic face model ~~templates~~ template, presenting the image file and the selected model template to the sender and

requesting the sender to mark features on the image file associated with features on the selected model template highlighted in succession, wherein

the category information relates to whether the animated entity will be generally available or only available for the sender.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of enabling a sender to create an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from the sender to a recipient of claim 12, further comprising:

after the sender marks the image file, presenting to the sender a preview of at least one expression associated with the marked image file;

if the ~~user~~ sender does not accept the image file after the preview, presenting again the image file and selected model template for the sender to redo or add marked features on the image file; and

if the ~~user~~ sender accepts the image file after the preview, presenting the image file as an optional animated entity when the sender chooses an animated entity to deliver a multi-media message.

14. (Original) The method of enabling a sender to create an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from the sender to a recipient of claim 12, further comprising:

presenting the sender with options to modify a texture of teeth, eyes and/or tongue.

15. (Original) The method of enabling a sender to create an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from the sender to a recipient of claim 12, further comprising:

presenting the sender with options to modify a parameter associated with the appearance of weight for the image file.

16-19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) A method of enabling sender customization of an animated entity for use in delivering a multi-media message, the method comprising, over a network ~~the Internet~~:

receiving from ~~the~~ a sender an image of an entity to be used as the animated entity;

requesting the sender to mark a plurality of facial features on the entity and receiving the facial features marked by the sender;

computing a customized model associated with the entity; and

storing the customized model in a private database for restricted access by the sender.

21. (Currently Amended) The method of enabling sender customization of an animated entity for use in delivering a multi-media message of claim 20, the method further comprising:

after computing the customized model associated with the entity, displaying at least one facial expression to the sender of the customized model.

22. (Original) The method of enabling sender customization of an animated entity for use in delivering a multi-media message of claim 21, the method further comprising:

after displaying at least one facial expression to the sender of the customized model, presenting the sender with an option to change a magnitude associated with each displayed facial expression.

23. (Original) The method of enabling sender customization of an animated entity for use in delivering a multi-media message of claim 20, wherein requesting the sender to mark a plurality of facial features on the entity further comprises requesting the sender to mark facial features associated with eye corners, eye lids, nose, mouth corners, lip boundaries, and hair outline.

24. (Currently Amended) A method of enabling sender customization, ~~over the Internet~~ a network, of an animated entity used for delivering a multi-media message, the method comprising:

receiving from ~~the~~ a sender, via the network, an image of an entity to be used as the animated entity;

requesting the sender to mark a plurality of facial features on the entity and in response, receiving facial features marked by the sender;

computing a customized model associated with the entity;

presenting a proof-animated entity to the sender based on the customized model; and

if approved by the sender, storing the customized model in a private database for restricted access by the sender.

25-26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently Amended) A method of creating an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from a remote sender to a recipient, the method comprising:

receiving from the remote sender an image file;

presenting the sender an option to zoom the image file;

if the sender selects to zoom the image file, presenting the sender with a zoomed image file;

requesting the sender to mark features on the image file in preparation for creating an animated entity from the image file; and

presenting the image file as an optional animated entity when the sender chooses an animated entity to deliver a multi-media message.

28. (Currently Amended) The method of creating an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of claim 27, wherein presenting the image file as an optional animated entity further comprises presenting the sender with the following background choices for the selected animated entity:

(1) a predefined background, wherein the animated entity is automatically scaled to fill ~~the~~ a frame of ~~the~~ a window in which it is presented;

(2) a background associated with the received image file, wherein the animated entity has ~~the~~ a same size as in the image file; and

(3) if the sender selects to zoom the image file, the zoomed image file ~~as~~ includes the background, wherein the animated entity is presented with ~~the~~ a size as given in the zoomed image file.

29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently Amended) The method ~~of creating a personal animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient~~ of claim 29 27, wherein ~~presenting the selectable personal animated entity further comprises~~ further comprising presenting the sender with an option to select a predefined background, wherein the personal animated entity is automatically scaled to fill a window in which it is presented.

31. (Currently Amended) The method ~~of creating a personal animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient~~ of claim 30 27, wherein presenting the selectable personal animated entity further comprises presenting the sender with an option to select a background associated with the received image file, wherein the ~~personal~~ animated entity has the same size as in the image file.

32. (Currently Amended) The method ~~of creating a personal animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient~~ of claim 31 27, wherein ~~presenting the selectable personal animated entity further comprises~~ comprising presenting the sender with an option, if the sender selected to zoom the image file, to choose the zoomed image file as the background, wherein the ~~personal~~ animated entity is presented with the size as given in the zoomed image file.

33. (New) An apparatus comprising:
means for receiving from a sender, via a network, an image file;

means for providing the sender an option to zoom the image file;

means for presenting the sender with a zoomed image file;

means for requesting the sender to mark features on the image file in preparation for creating an animated entity from the image file; and

means for presenting the image file as an optional animated entity when the sender chooses an animated entity to deliver a multi-media message.